

REMARKS

In view of the following discussion, the Applicants submit that none of the claims now pending in the application is made obvious under the provisions of 35 U.S.C. §103. Thus, the Applicants believe that all of these claims are now in allowable form.

I. REJECTION OF CLAIMS 23-35, 37-38, AND 41-57 UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 23-35, 37-38, and 41-57 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over the Jennings et al. patent (United States Patent No. 6,606,615, issued August 12, 2003, hereinafter "Jennings") in view of the Lazaroff report ("Project Genoa CrisisScope," hereinafter "Lazaroff"). In response, the Applicants have amended independent claims 23 and 41 in order to more clearly recite aspects of the present rejection. Claims 30 and 49 have been cancelled without prejudice.

In particular, the Applicants submit that Jennings in view of Lazaroff fails to disclose or suggest a plurality of queries that form a hierarchical structure, such that a parent query is automatically responded to by responding to its children queries, as recited in independent claims 23 and 41.

The Examiner acknowledges in the Office Action that Jennings does not teach "queries in a hierarchical structure" (Office Action, Page 6). The Examiner suggests, however, that this gap in the teachings of Jennings is bridged by Lazaroff. The Applicants respectfully disagree.

Although Lazaroff discloses that an argumentation tool may posit a series of hierarchical questions in which intermediate conclusions provide evidence for final conclusions, Lazaroff does not disclose exactly how the answers to questions positioned lower in the hierarchy (e.g., children queries) may be used to form answers for questions positioned higher in the hierarchy (e.g., parent queries). More specifically still, Lazaroff does not disclose that an answer for a parent query is automatically generated from the answers to its children queries, as claimed by the Applicants.

The Applicants' claims are directed to a method for accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, where the argument is generated when a user answers a set of queries in a selected template that is relevant

to the given situation. The set of queries is formed in a hierarchical structure, such that a high-level "parent" query that has a plurality of lower-level "children" queries is automatically responded to by responding to the children queries of the parent query. This helps a user to arrive quickly at a conclusion that is supported by the responses to the queries. In one embodiment, the parent query is automatically answered by averaging the responses to the children queries, by selecting from among the responses to the children queries the response with the most positive outcome, or by selecting from among the responses to the children queries the response with the most negative outcome. In a further embodiment, the user selects the method by which the parent query is answered.

Specifically, independent claims 23 and 41 recite:

23. A method for accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, the method comprising:

using a processor, performing steps comprising:

presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein a subset of the plurality of searchable templates is relevant to the given situation;

receiving from said user a selection of one of said plurality of searchable templates from said subset that is relevant to the given situation, said one of said plurality of searchable templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation and including a plurality of queries;

displaying said plurality of queries to said user, wherein each of said plurality of queries has a categorical scale of likelihood regarding whether the given situation will likely have a negative or positive result, wherein the plurality of queries is formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent query that has a plurality of children queries is automatically responded to by responding to the children queries of the parent query;

receiving from said user one or more user responses to said plurality of queries, where each of said one or more user responses is selected from the plurality of potential responses such that each of the user responses indicates a likelihood of a negative or positive result for an associated one of the plurality of queries;

receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to said plurality of queries, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the one or more user responses;

evaluating said one or more user responses, in accordance with the likelihood of a negative or positive result indicated by each of said one or more user responses, such that said one or more user responses collectively support a conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or

negative result;

forming an argument supporting the conclusion of the evaluating, the argument comprising the relevant template, the one or more user responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion; and

publishing said argument, including said relevant template, said one or more user responses, said supporting evidence, and said conclusion, for review. (Emphasis added)

41. A computer readable storage medium containing executable program instructions for accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, the instructions causing a processor to perform steps comprising:

presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein a subset of the plurality of searchable templates is relevant to the given situation;

receiving from said user a selection of one of said plurality of searchable templates from said subset that is relevant to the given situation, said one of said plurality of searchable templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation and including a plurality of queries;

displaying said plurality of queries to said user, wherein each of said plurality of queries has a categorical scale of likelihood regarding whether the given situation will likely have a negative or positive result, wherein the plurality of queries is formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent query that has a plurality of children queries is automatically responded to by responding to the children queries of the parent query;

receiving from said user one or more user responses to said plurality of queries, where each of said one or more user responses is selected from the plurality of potential responses such that each of the user responses indicates a likelihood of a negative or positive result for an associated one of the plurality of queries;

receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to said plurality of queries, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the one or more user responses;

evaluating said one or more user responses, in accordance with the likelihood of a negative or positive result indicated by each of said one or more user responses, such that said one or more user responses collectively support a conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result;

forming an argument supporting the conclusion of the evaluating, the argument comprising the relevant template, the one or more user responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion; and

publishing said argument, including said relevant template, said one or more user responses, said supporting evidence, and said conclusion, for review. (Emphasis added)

As discussed above, Jennings in view of Lazaroff fails to disclose or suggest a plurality of queries that form a hierarchical structure, such that a parent query is

automatically responded to by responding to its children queries, as recited in independent claims 23 and 41. As such, the Applicants submit that independent claims 23 and 41 are not obvious over Jennings in view of Lazaroff.

Dependent claims 24-29, 31-35, 37-38, 42-48, and 50-57 depend, respectively, from independent claims 23 and 41 and recite at least all of the same features recited in independent claims 23 and 41. As such, and for at least the reasons set forth above, the Applicants submit that claims 24-29, 31-35, 37-38, 42-48, and 50-57 are also not obvious over Jennings in view of Lazaroff. Therefore, the Applicants submit that dependent claims 24-29, 31-35, 37-38, 42-48, and 50-57 also fully satisfy the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §103 and are patentable thereunder.

Moreover, with respect to claims 32 and 51, the Applicants submit that Jennings in view of Lazaroff fails to disclose or suggest that the parent query is automatically answered using a response technique selected by the user. By contrast, neither Jennings nor Lazaroff appears to disclose that the user (i.e., the individual answering the queries) has any control over the method by which his or her answers are used to answer higher-level queries. The Examiner has not pointed with specificity to any portions of Jennings or Lazaroff that are alleged to disclose this particular feature. Thus, the Applicants submit that claims 32 and 51 are also allowable for this additional reason.

With respect to claims 33 and 52, the Applicants submit that Jennings in view of Lazaroff fails to disclose or suggest that the technique by which a parent query is automatically answered involves answering the parent query with a response that averages responses associated with the plurality of children queries. By contrast, neither Jennings nor Lazaroff appears to disclose a particular technique by which a parent query is answered using responses to children queries. The Examiner has not pointed with specificity to any portions of Jennings or Lazaroff that are alleged to disclose this particular feature. Thus, the Applicants submit that claims 33 and 52 are also allowable for this additional reason.

Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 23-29, 31-35, 37-38, 41-48, and 50-57 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 be withdrawn.

II. NEW CLAIMS

The Applicants have added new claims 58-59. Claims 58-59 depend from independent claim 23 and recite at least all of the same features recited in independent claim 23. As such, claims 58-59 are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons that claim 23 is believed to be allowable. Moreover, claims 58-59 recite specific techniques by which a parent query is answered using responses to children queries. As discussed above, none of the cited references is believed to disclose particular techniques for answering parent queries in a hierarchical query structure.

III. CONCLUSION

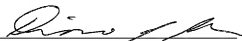
Thus, the Applicants submit that all of the presented claims fully satisfy the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §103. Consequently, the Applicants believe that all of the presented claims are presently in condition for allowance. Accordingly, both reconsideration of this application and its swift passage to issue are earnestly solicited.

If, however, the Examiner believes that there are any unresolved issues requiring the issuance of a final action in any of the claims now pending in the application, it is requested that the Examiner telephone Diana J. Rea, Esq. at (732) 542-2280 so that appropriate arrangements can be made for resolving such issues as expeditiously as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

August 3, 2010
Date

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